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## FOREWORD

As befits a land of harsh climatic extremes, impoverished soils and rugged topography, the West Coast of Tasmania is largely unroaded and uninhabited. However, the central portion of the West Coast enjoys the mixed blessing of rich ore deposits whose exploitation has resulted in the growth of towns isolated in the wilderness, and whose economic exhaustion has resulted in the death of as many towns as remain today in the region. Queenstown, Gormanston, Strahan, Zeehan and Rosebery are the survivors. These towns form the core of the area under discussion in this volume. The exact area discussed varies according to author and subject matter, but is generally roughly bounded by Macquarie Harbour and the Gordon River in the south, the Pieman River in the north and the line of the King River Valley in the east.

This region is characterized by a highly complex geology and geomorphology, varied and largely Tasmanian endemic vegetation, a fascinating fauna and a distinctive social and demographic structure. The physical, biological and social environments provide the resources utilized by the major industries of the region. The economic giant is mining, but the resources of the region are also used for timber production, hydro-electricity and tourism, all of which pursuits seem destined for an uncertain or contentious future.

Despite the localized activities of both aboriginal and western man in the region, the West Coast landscape deserves the adjective 'pummelled' bestowed on it by Professor Geoffrey Blainey in his keynote address. The theme of the interaction of man and landscape introduced by Professor Blainey finds further expression in most of the subsequent papers, whether in terms of the impact of the landscape on the activities of man, or in terms of the impact of the activities of man on the landscape. However, this volume is as much concerned with the future of the region as with the present and past.

Prediction is a game for the brave and necessitates considerable caution. But the 'should' of the future differs from the 'will' of the future, and contrasting viewpoints on desirable developments, as presented in this volume, may provide a basis for discussion on the controllable future of the region. Whether man continues to pummel the region or whether the future is one of relative harmony is controllable, and we hope that this volume will provide an information base and a stimulus for achieving such control.

The symposium, the proceedings of which are reported in this volume, was held in Queenstown on Saturday, 30 October, to Monday, 1 November 1976. The society is indebted to the Mt. Lyell Mining and Railway Company for providing staff and facilities during the symposium, to the organizing committee, in particular Dr. Banks, and to the leaders of excursions.